

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03
CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 DOTE-00 /094 W
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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8937
INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY LOME
AMEMBASSY MONROVIA
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY ACCRA
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 00887

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, CG, BE
SUBJECT: MOBUTU VISIT TO BELGIUM

REFS: A) KINSHASA 246, B) 76 BRUSSELS 12397, C) 76 BRUSSELS 2093

SUMMARY: THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT WAVED OFF ITS UNINVITED
GUEST, PRESIDENT MOBUTU, WITH MIXED FEELINGS THIS WEEK.
HIS EXTENDED VISIT TO BRUSSELS WENT OFF SMOOTHLY AND
CONFIRMED THAT, FROM MOBUTU'S POINT OF VIEW, THE UNHAPPY
ERA OF BELGIAN-ZAIRIAN ESTRANGEMENT IS OVER. HOWEVER,
MOBUTU MADE IT CLEAR HERE THAT FRIENDSHIP HAS ITS BURDENS.
BELGIAN OFFICIALS SAID THAT HE EXPECTS FOREIGN (PARTICULARLY
BELGIAN) INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL INTERESTS, NOW MOVING
BACK IN AFTER THE DEMISE OF "ZAIRIANIZATION," TO ACCEPT
RESPONSIBILITY FOR A RESURGENCE OF THE ZAIRE ECONOMY.
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IN PURSUANCE OF THIS POLICY, HE MADE KNOWN HIS EXPECTATIONS
OF GENEROUS BELGIAN AID AND OF SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENT BY
BELGIAN ENTREPRENEURS. AFTER SOME INTERNAL DEBATE, THE
GOVERNMENT HAS CONCLUDED THAT BELGIUM CANNOT AFFORD TO
COLD-SHOULDER MOBUTU, BUT IT WILL TRY TO GET AWAY WITH
A SECOND HONEYMOON ON THE ECONOMY PLAN. PRIVATE BELGIAN
INVESTORS ARE LIKewise UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT RISKING NEW

CAPITAL IN ZAIRE. JOINT BELGO-ZAIRIAN JOINT COMMISSION MEETS, REVIEWS STATUS OF RETROCESSION, AND SIGNS AGREEMENTS FOR TRANSPORTATION COOPERATION. END SUMMARY.

1. BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCES GAVE US RUNDOWN ON JANUARY 17-26 VISIT TO BELGIUM OF ZAIRE'S PRESIDENT MOBUTU WHICH WAS NOT AN "OFFICIAL" VISIT. MOBUTU STAYED "AS GUEST OF BELGIAN GOVERNMENT" JANUARY 17-20 AND THEREAFTER AT HIS OWN RESIDENCE IN THE SUBURBS. HE WAS MET AT AIRPORT BY KING BAUDOUIN, LATER MET PRIVATELY WITH KING, WAS ENTERTAINED AT LUNCH BY KING, AND HONORED AT A FORMAL DINNER BY PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS. FINALLY, PRESIDENT MOBUTU, FLANKED BY FOREIGN MINISTER NGUZA AND ADVISOR BISENGIMANA MET JANUARY 19 WITH TINDEMANS, FOREIGN MINISTER VAN ELSLANDE AND OTHER KEY MINISTERS. REST OF VISIT WAS TAKEN UP BY MEETINGS WITH BUSINESSMEN AND INDUSTRIALISTS, INCLUDING FACTORY VISITS.

2. JOINT BELGO-ZAIRE GRAND COMMISSION-FOREIGN MINISTRY DESK OFFICER (JAENEN) TOLD US THAT MOBUTU VISIT CAUSED SWITCHING OF VENUE OF SCHEDULED JANUARY MEETING OF BELGO-ZAIRE COMMISSION FROM KINSHASA TO BRUSSELS TO TAKE PLACE CONCURRENTLY WITH PRESIDENTIAL VISIT. JAENEN SAID COMMISSION EXPERTS WORKED TOGETHER JANUARY 13-14 AND SUBMITTED FINDINGS TO COMMISSION PLENARY CHAIRED BY NGUZA AND VAN ELSLANDE, WHICH RATIFIED THEIR WORK JANUARY 17 AND HELD A SIGNING SESSION JANUARY 19.

3. FOLLOWING IS JAENEN'S SUMMARY OF WORK OF COMMISSION:
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-. ZAIRIANIZATION AND RETROCESSION - JAENEN SAID THERE HAD BEEN "SOME PROGRESS" SINCE MARCH AGREEMENT. IN THE CATEGORY OF COMPENSATION TO PRIVATE PERSONS, SOME CASES HAVE BEEN NEGOTIATED AND SETTLED, AND GOZ HAS NOW AUTHORIZED BANK OF ZAIRE TO PAY "FIRST TEN DOSSIERS" OUT OF 600 TOTAL. JAENEN CHARACTERIZED PROGRESS OF RETROCESSION TO BELGIAN COMPANIES AS "MIXED" WITH SOME COMPANIES SATISFACTORILY NEGOTIATING COMPENSATION AND RETURN TO ZAIRE WITH GOZ AND OTHERS FAILING OR STILL NEGOTIATING. JAENEN TOLD US THAT THE CELZA PLANTATIONS ISSUE DID NOT COME UP DURING VISIT AND SAID THAT BELGIAN OWNERS ARE AFRAID THEY WILL "NOT BE INDEMNIFIED AT ALL."

B. TRANSPORTATION SECTOR

(1) ZAIRE HAD ASKED BELGIUM TO ASSIST TWO GOVERNMENT COMPANIES, ONTRA (WATER TRANSPORTATION) AND SNCZ (RAIL). IN REPLY, BELGIUM AGREED TO PUT ONE "TOP MANAGER" IN EACH COMPANY "AS LONG AS NECESSARY" AND HAS AUTHORIZED BF 100 MILLION GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT LOAN (30 YEARS, NO INTEREST, 10 YEAR GRACE PERIOD) TO

FINANCE PURCHASE OF SPARE PARTS FOR ONTRA. BELGIANS
FURTHER AGREED TO PROVIDE TRAINING IN ZAIRE AND
SCHOLORSHIP IN BELGIUM FOR ZAIRIAN TRANSPORTATION SECTOR
PERSONNEL.

(2) AGREEMENT WAS REACHED TO START COMPENSATION
NEGOTIATION FOR KDL, A RAILWAY THAT HAD BEEN NATIONALIZED
TWO YEARS AGO.

(3) BELGIUM AGREED TO HELP CREATE MERCHANT MARINE
ACADEMY IN ZAIRE TO TRAIN ZAIRIAN COMMERCIAL SEAMEN.
PREVIOUSLY, ZAIRIAN CANDIDATES HAD COME UP TO THE BELGIAN
ACADEMY IN ANTWERP. UNDER NEW AGREEMENT, BELGIUM WILL
FUND BELGIAN INSTRUCTORS SENT TO NEW ACADEMY IN ZAIRE
AND GOZ WILL PROVIDE BUILDINGS AND EQUIPMENT.

C. SHORT TERM CREDIT - JAENEN SAID COMMISSION
REVIEWED STATUS OF PREVIOUSLY AUTHORIZED SPECIAL BELGIAN
REVOLVING CREDIT TO ZAIRE. HE SAID AMOUNT OF CREDIT
WAS CURRENTLY AT BF 700 MILLION, WITH BF 100 MILLION
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ALLOCATED FOR FINANCING COMPENSATION FOR PRIVATE PERSONS,
WHILE REMAINING BF 700 MILLION AVAILABLE ON REVOLVING BASIS
TO REFINANCE SHORT-TERM PRIVATE DEBT.

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D. RETURN OF ART OBJECTS TO ZAIRE - JAENEN SAID BELGIUM TOOK INITIATIVE, AS A "GESTURE OF FRIENDSHIP", TO RETURN TO ZAIRE CERTAIN ART OBJECTS HOUSED AT THE AFRICAN ART MUSEUM IN Tervuren. HE SAID FIRST SHIPMENT WOULD BE MADE IN LATE FEBRUARY OR EARLY MARCH. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION, HE SAID THAT Tervuren MUSEUM COLLECTION WOULD NOT BE DECIMATED BUT ONLY SELECTIVE DONATIONS WOULD BE MADE TO ZAIRE "TO FILL GAPS IN THEIR COLLECTION".

4. TINDEMANS TOLD CHARGE LAST WEEK THAT PRESIDENT MOBUTU HAD EXPRESSED TO HIM CONCERN ABOUT HIGH VISIBILITY OF U.S. PRESENCE IN ZAIRE AND POLITICAL RISK TO HIM OF SEEMING TO BE TOO CLOSE TO AMERICANS, WONDERING WHETHER U.S. ASSISTANCE COULD NOT BE CHanneled THROUGH BELGIUM. TINDEMANS REPEATED MOBUTU'S CONCERN TO VICE PRESIDENT
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MONDALE DURING JANUARY 24 BILATERAL MEETING (BONN 1616 NOTAL). FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCES TOLD US MOBUTU'S APPROACH WAS MADE IN CONTEXT OF DISCUSSION OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, WITH MOBUTU VIEWING ZAIRE "SURROUNDED BY ENEMIES" AND REQUIRING SUPPORT FROM HIS "FRIENDS." FOREIGN MINISTRY BELIEVES THAT MOBUTU MAY HAVE PICKED UP THE NOTION THAT HE WAS BEGINNING TO LOOK TOO MUCH LIKE AN AMERICAN CLIENT FROM COMMENTS OF HIS TOGOLESE FRIENDS WHILE ON HIS RECENT VISIT TO TOGO.

5. JAENEN SAID MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND RECENT U.S.- BELGIAN CONSULTATIONS ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR ZAIRE WERE NOT DISCUSSED (SEPTEL).

6. OVERRIDING THEME OF MOBUTU VISIT AND TUNE HE, BISENGIMANA, NGUZA, ET AL PLAYED THROUGHOUT THE VISIT - TO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, IN PRESS AND TIV INTERVIEWS, TO BELGIAN BUSINESSMEN, AND IN MOBUTU SPEECH TO PRESTIGIOUS FEDERATION DES ENTREPRISES DE BELGIQUE WAS THE SAME:
-- ZAIRIANIZATION WAS PAST HISTORY AND COMPENSATION WAS NOW BEING PAID;
-- WITH THE HELP OF FRIENDS, BANKERS, AND IMF, ZAIRIAN ECONOMY WOULD BOUNCE BACK, AND
-- THEREFORE, BELGIAN PRIVATE ENTERPRISE MUST RETURN TO ZAIRE AND BRING ALONG NEEDED NEW INVESTMENT.

7. JAENEN SAID THIS NEW ZAIRIAN BOOSTERISM WAS NOT

GOING DOWN WELL IN BELGIAN BUSINESS CIRCLES. CORRESPONDENT FOR U.S. BUSINESS JOURNAL WHO HAS MADE EXTENSIVE SOUNDINGS IN BELGIAN PRIVATE SECTOR TOLD US THAT MANY COMPANIES HAVE AGREED TO GO BACK TO ZAIRE BECAUSE THAT WAS ONLY POSSIBLE WAY TO REGAIN CONTROL OF THEIR ASSETS THERE BUT WERE NOT PLANNING TO RISK ANY FURTHER CAPITAL.

8. COMMENT: THERE IS DEBATE WITHIN THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT WHETHER THE MOBUTU REGIME IS CAPABLE OF STRAIGHTENING
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ITSELF OUT. WE ARE TOLD THAT FOREIGN MINISTER VAN ELSLANDE HEADS A GROUP WHICH THINKS THAT ATTEMPTING TO ACCOMPLISH SOMETHING REAL WITH THE MOBUTU GOVERNMENT IS AN EXPENSIVE WASTE OF TIME. BUT THE DECISION IS TO KEEP TRYING IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN THAT NO ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE IS IN SIGHT. THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT IS RESOLVED TO MANAGE THE NEW RELATIONSHIP ON AN AD HOC, CASE-BY-CASE BASIS. SAYS A VOICE OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY: "WITH ZAIRE WE HAVE MORE AGREED PRINCIPLES THAN WE KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH. FROM NOW ON WE WILL JUST LOOK AT - WHAT'S YOUR CLICHE? - THE BOTTOM LINE." RENNER

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